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# The Relationship of South Carolina Department of Transportation Employees Age and Their Willingness to Perform New Jobs

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CERTIFICATION OF AUTHORSHIP: I certify that I am the author of this paper and that any assistance I received in its preparation is fully acknowledged and disclosed in the paper. I have also cited any sources from which I used data, ideas or words, either quoted directly or paraphrased. I also certify that this paper was prepared by me specifically for this course.

Student Signature: /s/ Calmcer L. Wright

**Abstract**

This research was conducted to see if there is a relationship between employees' age and their willingness to accept new job duties. The hypothesis for this research states there is a relationship between one's age and one's willingness to accept a new job duty. A survey questionnaire was used to gather data for this research. The survey questionnaire was conducted with 150 randomly selected employees of South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT). Of the 150 randomly selected we received a response from 105 employees. After inputting the data and conducting a statistical Chi-Square Test, I did not support my hypothesis.

Often times in a career, many people are required to deal with change in their current position. Many people are willing to perform the new job duty; some are not. A person who has performed a job for many years be content with doing what he or she has always done. Some people tend to think that a person's age has a relationship with how he or she deal with changes in jobs. As a manager we sometimes do not understand that due to generational gaps, some of our employees are willing to perform new jobs and some are not. Many relates the unwillingness to adapt to change on the part of older employees as just being stuck in their ways and not willing to adapt to change; however this is not always the case. To help investigate the topic of, "There a relationship between one's age and one's willingness to accept a new a job duty," a survey was conducted. A survey questionnaire was conducted with 150 randomly selected employees of SCDOT. Of the 150 randomly selected employees we received responses from 105 employees. Once the responses were received, a Chi-Square Test which is a test to determine how well an observed set of data fits an expected set of data, was performed. The Chi-Square Test will determine if I support my hypothesis or fail to reject the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis is a hypothesis that states there is no statistically significant relationship between the variables under study. The question at hand, which is, "Does a person age have any relationship with a person willingness to accept new job duties?"

**Hypothesis**

There is a relationship between one's age and one's willingness to accept a new job duty.

**Literature**

The results of a survey sponsored by Modern Maturity magazine, showed that workers over 40 years of age are willing to learn new job skills (Bird, as cited in Newman, 1995). It

should be noted that although this population over 40 years of age is willing, potential employers are reluctant to give them a chance. "Age is seen in our youth-obsessed culture as a liability, particularly in terms of potential pension and health insurance issues for employers" (Newman, 1995, p 64).

Harvey Sterns and Michael McDaniel, specialists in industrial gerontology at the University of Akron, performed a study on "comparing younger and older people working full time at similar jobs show only minor actual differences in performance" (Shellenbarger and Hymowitz, 1994). One of the noted differences is, "While older workers typically take longer to learn a new task, when given enough time they perform as well as the younger adults do" (Shellenbarger and Hymowitz, 1994). I can attest to this being true in my field of work; the only problem with this is that when a new assignment becomes available, in most cases I do not have the time to teach the older adults because upper management needed whatever is at hand yesterday. This is the reason many employees feel that opportunities to perform new assignments are not distributed fairly with both young and old employees. Most young employees feel that they are doing the bulk of the work and many of the older employees feel that they are not given a chance to try new assignments.

A survey conducted by the Conference Board, a New York business-research group, suggested, "Older workers are less flexible than their younger colleagues in taking new assignment" (Shellenbarger and Hymowitz, 1994). However, when assigning new job opportunities, companies need to be very mindful of the experience and knowledge that many of the older employees have versus the younger employees. That experience and knowledge that the older employees have cannot be taught to the younger employees in a short period of time.

**Methodology**

The research for this project is based upon a random sample group consisting of employees currently employed at SCDOT with e-mail access. A survey questionnaire was created and submitted (see Appendix A) which required respondents' answers to various questions relative to their willingness to accept a new job duty and their current age range. Initially, 150 survey questionnaires were sent out; 105 replies were received. The survey was sent to the various districts as well as SCDOT Headquarter employees, which included a very diverse selection of employees from our maintenance up to senior management. We also had a very diverse age range as well. The employees who were selected appeared on SCDOT's master e-mail list. Of the possible 3,000 employees that have e-mail access, I chose to sample 5 % of the population assuming that the sampled population is a good representative of the entire population. If there were enough people with the same beginning letter of their last name I would include 5 – 6 people in my sample for a particular letter. The survey composed of a total of 7 questions with 2 questions being directly related to the hypothesis. The other 5 questions were for information only and they also served as a help to better understand the analytical outcome of the survey results.

**Findings**

In my survey questionnaire I asked some questions that illuminate the characteristics of those who responded to the questions. I will share the frequency of all questions and statements that were included in the survey. I used Frequencies Tables and Charts (Appendix B) to generate summaries of the data gathered in this research.

The first question was, "What is your age?" The respondents had several ranges of age to choose from. It appeared that about 69% of the respondents were over the age of 40. Of the 69% of the respondents, about 51% of the respondents were in the age range of 40-50 years of age.

The second question was, "What is your highest level of education?" Over 52% of the respondents had a Bachelor's Degree. With 13% of the respondents with a Master's degree, 67% of the respondents had at least a 4-year degree or better.

The last question was, "How long have you been in your current position?" Forty-one percent of the respondents had been in their current position from 1 – 5 years, with 25.7% being in their position from 6 – 10 years. It appears that over 67% of the respondents had been in their current position for less than 10 years. This information could play a major role in understanding whether or not these employees are willing to perform new jobs or not. Perhaps they have not learned all that they could for their current position or the work is redundant and they are ready for something new.

I will now address the statements that were included in the survey questionnaire. A Likert scale was used to rate the answers for the statement portion of the survey. The Likert scale is a rating scale that measures the strength of agreement with a set of clear statements. The first statement is, "I am willing to perform a new job assignment within my current position." It was interesting to note that approximately 92% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they were willing to perform new job assignments within their current position. It appears that about 2% were not willing to perform new job assignments, with about 6% remaining neutral. This analysis demonstrates that many of SCDOT employees are very willing to perform new job assignments.

The second statement is, "I am willing to take training for new job assignments within my current position." Approximately 95% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were willing to train for new job assignments. Of the 95%, 61% of the respondents strongly agreed whereas on 3% disagreed. This analysis demonstrates that many of SCDOT employees are very willing to train for new job assignments.

The third statement is, "I prefer to do my current job rather than trying a new job." Approximately 33% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. Thirty-nine percent of the respondents disagreed that they would rather do their current position rather than trying a new job. Once again it appears that more people are willing to try new job duties than continue to perform their current job.

The last statement is, "I feel that new job opportunities are distributed fairly in my current organization." It was interesting to find out that a little over 33% of the respondents felt that new job opportunities were not distributed fairly in their current organization. Another 31% neither agreed nor disagreed with the way new job opportunities were distributed. Only 3% strongly agreed that new job opportunities were distributed fairly at SCDOT, whereas 11% of the respondent strongly disagreed that new jobs were distributed fairly.

The two questions that were directly related to my hypothesis were a) "I am willing to perform a new job assignment within my current position" and b) "What is your age?"

The hypothesis was tested using the Chi-Square test (see Appendix C). The test used the 2 specific questions from the survey questionnaire. Since the observed significance level of .577 is larger than .05, I failed to reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between one's age and one's willingness to accept a new job duty. Therefore my alternative hypothesis, "There is a relationship between one's age and one's willingness to accept a new job duty," could not be

supported with this research. The computed error rate was 9.5%. The small (5%) sample out of a possible 3,000 employees may have played a role in why I could not support my hypothesis.

**Discussion**

Although many studies have been performed based upon one's age and one's willingness to accept new job duties, there appears to be no relationship, based upon the selected sample at SCDOT. However, this does not mean that a relationship does not exist, but with this particular research at this time, the relationship cannot be supported. As noted earlier based upon research, many older employees are willing to accept new job duties, however many employers are not willing to give the older employees a fair opportunity.

References

Newman, B. K. (1995). Career change for those over 40: Critical issues and insights. *The Career Development Quarterly, 44 (1)*, 64. Retrieved December 10, 2004from ABI/INFORM Global, ProQuest Nursing Journals database.

Shellenbarger, S. & Hymowitz C. (1994). Over the hill? As population ages, older workers clash with younger bosses---employees, at 50, are seen as rigid, expendable; studies temper the view --- laws and a 'wisdom factor'. *Wall Street Journal*, PAGEA.1. Retrieved December 10, 2004 ABI/INFORM Global, ProQuest Nursing Journals database.

Appendix A

**Survey Questionnaire**

Please take the time to fill out this simple questionnaire and you can return the questionnaire to Carmen Wrig room 329 via the mail or hand delivery. The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect data for a CPM Projec responses will be kept confidential and no individual answers will be shared with anyone. If you would like t know the results of the study, please send e-mail to me at WrightCL@scdot.org or call me at 803-737-1428. ' you for your time.

| **For each of the statements below, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by placing a check in the appropriate column.** | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I am willing to perform a new job assignment within my current position. | | | | | |
| 2. I am willing to take training for new job assignments within my current position. | | | | | |
| 3. I prefer to do my current job rather than trying a new job. | | | | | |
| 4. I feel that new job opportunities are distributed fairly in my current organization | | | | | |
| **Please answer the following question, by circling the appropriate answer.** | | | | | |
| 5. What is your highest level of education completed | High School Diploma | Associates Degree | Bachelor's Degree | Master's Degree | Doctorate |
| 6. How long have you been in your current position? | Less Than a year | 1 - 5 Years | 6-10 Years | 11-15 Year | More than 15 Years |
| 7. What is your age? | 18 – 28 Years | 29 – 39 Years | 40– 50 years | 51- 60 Years | Over 60 Years |

Appendix B

# Frequencies

**Statistics**

| | | Respondent's Age | Respondent Willing to perform new job | Respondent prefer to do current job | Repondent willing to train for new assignment | Feel opportunities for new jobs are distributed farily | Highest level of education | How long in current position |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 | 105 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

# Frequency Table

**Respondent's Age**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 18-28 | 4 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 3.8 |
| | 29-39 | 29 | 27.6 | 27.6 | 31.4 |
| | 40-50 | 53 | 50.5 | 50.5 | 81.9 |
| | 51 -60 | 19 | 18.1 | 18.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 105 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Respondent Willing to perform new job**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Agree | 57 | 54.3 | 54.3 | 54.3 |
| | Agree | 40 | 38.1 | 38.1 | 92.4 |
| | neither agree nor disagree | 6 | 5.7 | 5.7 | 98.1 |
| | Disagree | 2 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 105 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Respondent prefer to do current job**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Agree | 3 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 2.9 |
| | Agree | 11 | 10.5 | 10.5 | 13.3 |
| | neither agree nor disagree | 35 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 46.7 |
| | Disagree | 41 | 39.0 | 39.0 | 85.7 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 14 | 13.3 | 13.3 | 99.0 |
| | no response | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 105 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Repondent willing to train for new assignment**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Agree | 64 | 61.0 | 61.0 | 61.0 |
| | Agree | 36 | 34.3 | 34.3 | 95.2 |
| | neither agree nor disagree | 2 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 97.1 |
| | Disagree | 3 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 105 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Feel opportunities for new jobs are distributed farily**

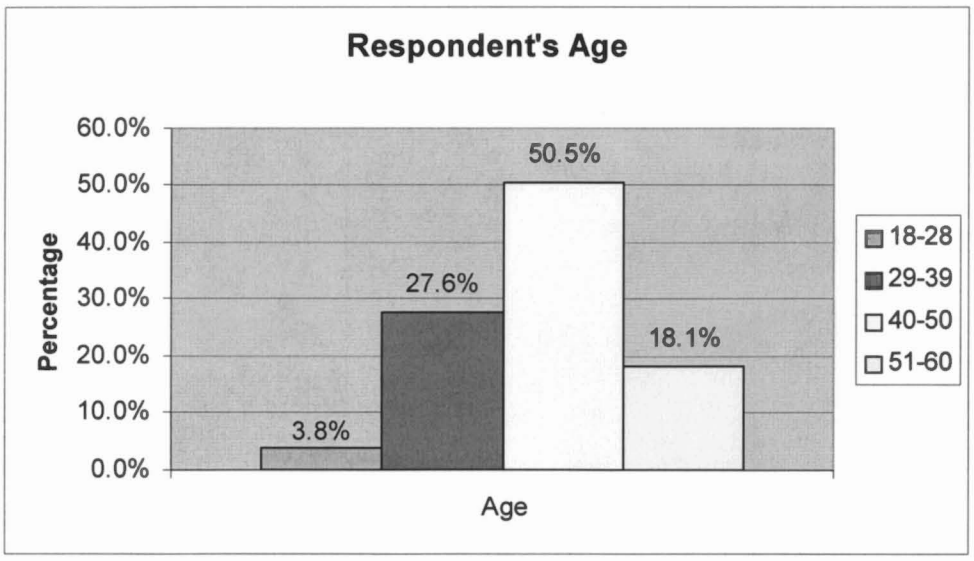
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Strongly Agree | 3 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 2.9 |
| | Agree | 22 | 21.0 | 21.0 | 23.8 |
| | neither agree nor disagree | 33 | 31.4 | 31.4 | 55.2 |
| | Disagree | 35 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 88.6 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 12 | 11.4 | 11.4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 105 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

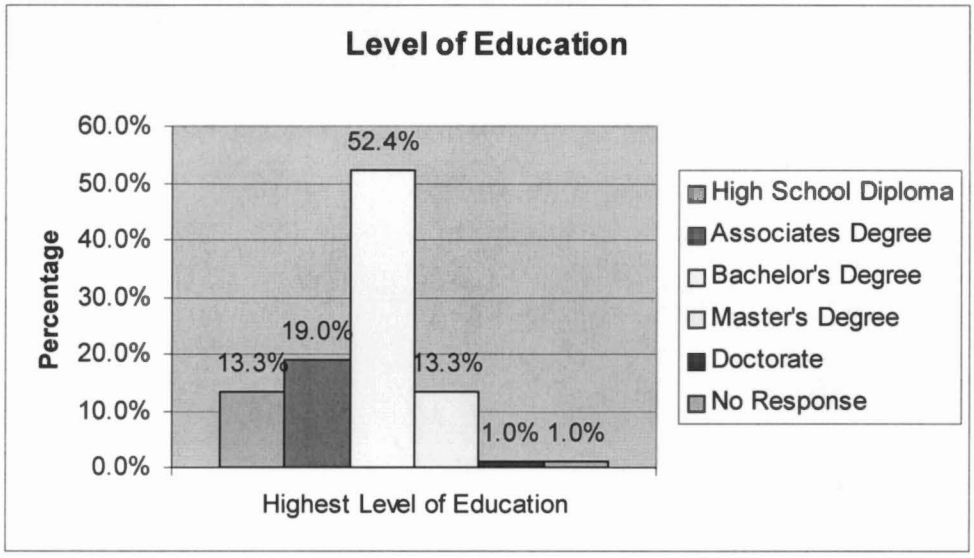
**Highest level of education**

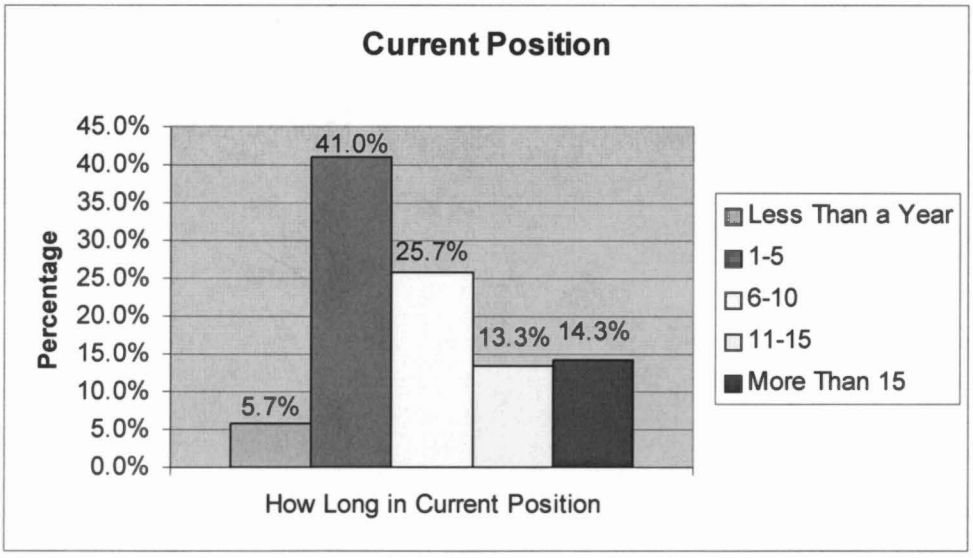
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | High School Diploma | 14 | 13.3 | 13.3 | 13.3 |
| | Associates Degree | 20 | 19.0 | 19.0 | 32.4 |
| | Bachelor's Degree | 55 | 52.4 | 52.4 | 84.8 |
| | Master's Degree | 14 | 13.3 | 13.3 | 98.1 |
| | Doctorate | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 99.0 |
| | No Response | 1 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 105 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

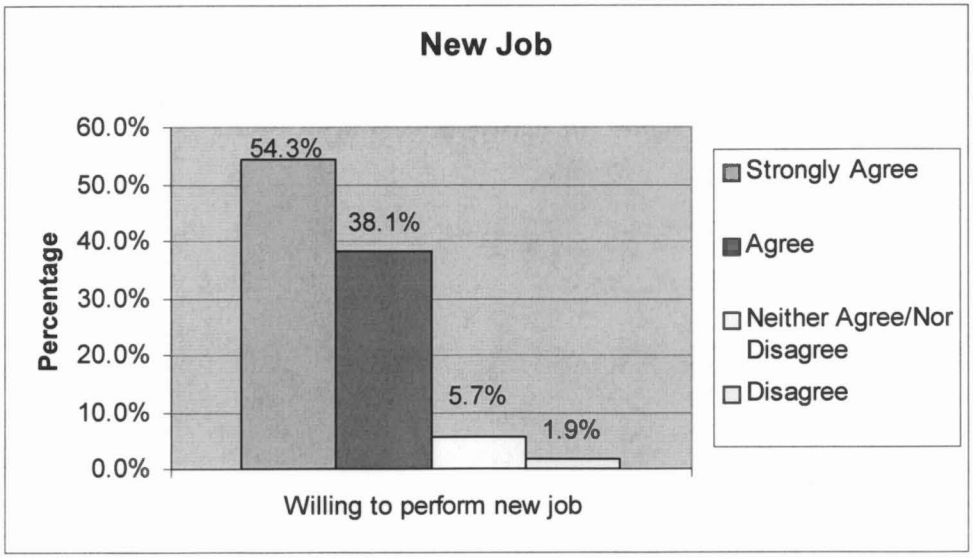
**How long in current position**

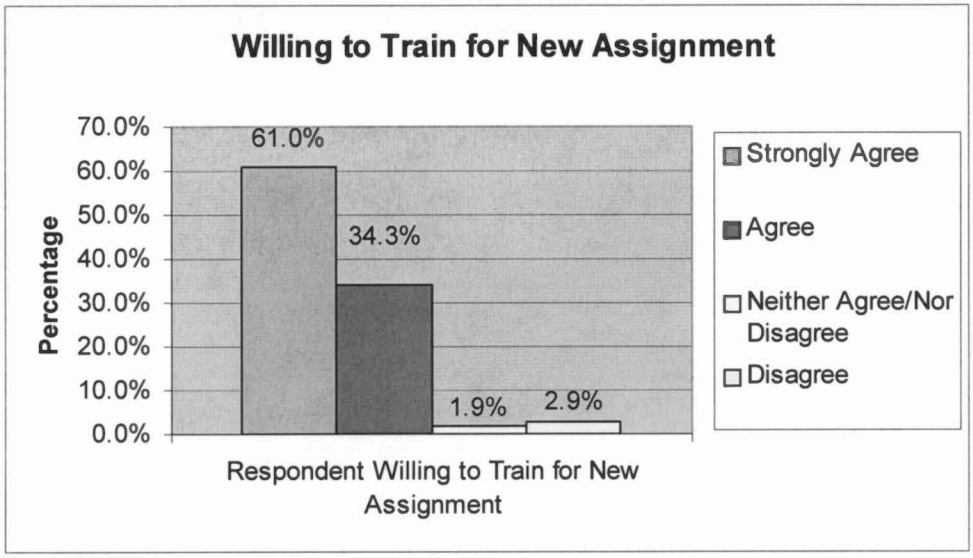
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Less than a year | 6 | 5.7 | 5.7 | 5.7 |
| | 1-5 | 43 | 41.0 | 41.0 | 46.7 |
| | 6-10 | 27 | 25.7 | 25.7 | 72.4 |
| | 11-15 | 14 | 13.3 | 13.3 | 85.7 |
| | More than 15 | 15 | 14.3 | 14.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 105 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

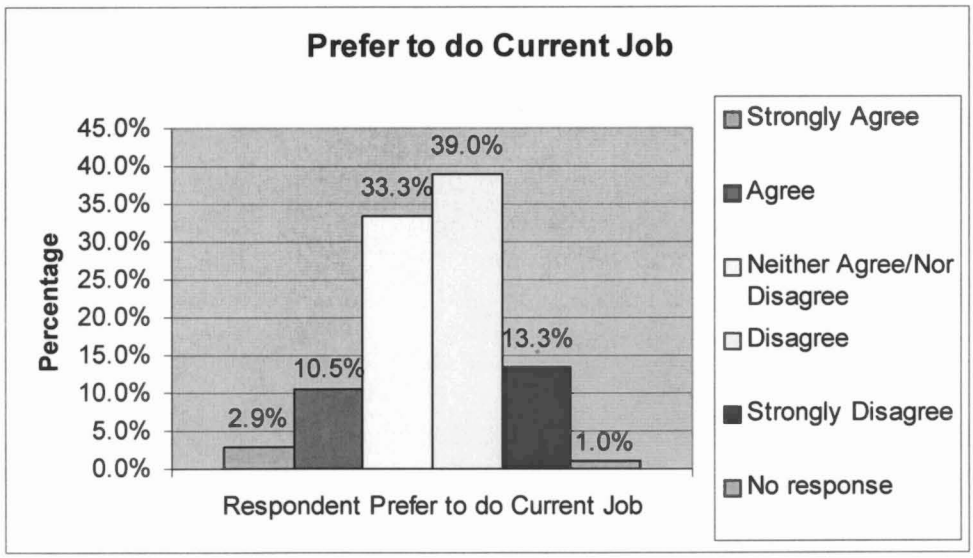


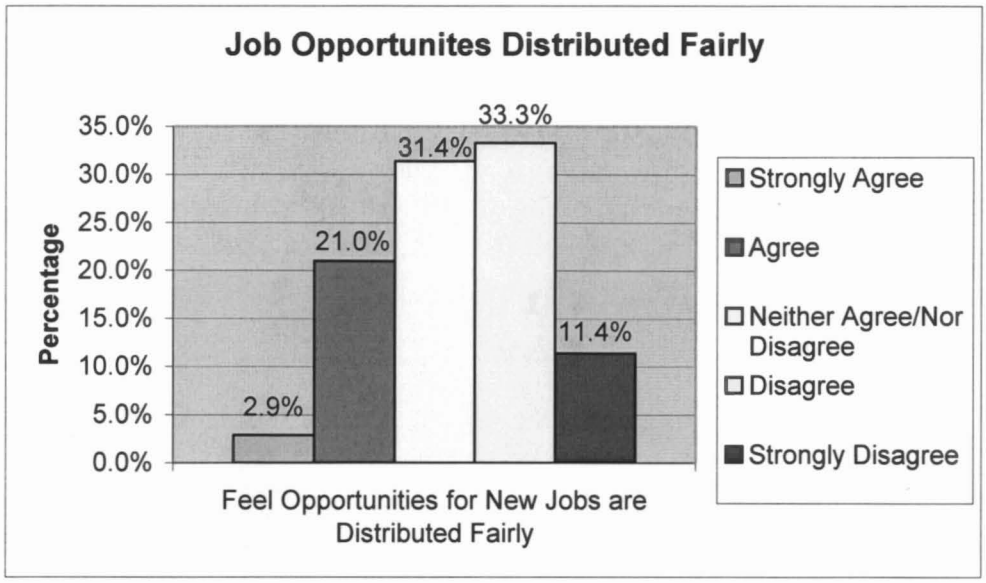







Appendix C

# Crosstabs

**Case Processing Summary**

| | Cases | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Valid | | Missing | | Total | |
| | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| Respondent's Age * Respondent Willing to perform new job | 105 | 100.0% | 0 | .0% | 105 | 100.0% |

**Respondent's Age * Respondent Willing to perform new job Crosstabulation**

| | | | Respondent Willing to perform new job | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Strongly Agree | Agree | neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Total |
| Respondent's Age | 18-28 | Count | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| | | Expected Count | 2.2 | 1.5 | .2 | .1 | 4.0 |
| | | % of Total | 1.9% | 1.9% | .0% | .0% | 3.8% |
| | 29-39 | Count | 15 | 13 | 0 | 1 | 29 |
| | | Expected Count | 15.7 | 11.0 | 1.7 | .6 | 29.0 |
| | | % of Total | 14.3% | 12.4% | .0% | 1.0% | 27.6% |
| | 40-50 | Count | 26 | 21 | 5 | 1 | 53 |
| | | Expected Count | 28.8 | 20.2 | 3.0 | 1.0 | 53.0 |
| | | % of Total | 24.8% | 20.0% | 4.8% | 1.0% | 50.5% |
| | 51 -60 | Count | 14 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 19 |
| | | Expected Count | 10.3 | 7.2 | 1.1 | .4 | 19.0 |
| | | % of Total | 13.3% | 3.8% | 1.0% | .0% | 18.1% |
| Total | | Count | 57 | 40 | 6 | 2 | 105 |
| | | Expected Count | 57.0 | 40.0 | 6.0 | 2.0 | 105.0 |
| | | % of Total | 54.3% | 38.1% | 5.7% | 1.9% | 100.0% |

**Chi-Square Tests**

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 7.584[a] | 9 | .577 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 9.751 | 9 | .371 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .562 | 1 | .453 |
| N of Valid Cases | 105 | | |

a. 10 cells (62.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .08.